



# Goodyear, Avondale and Litchfield Park on hook for \$4M

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Goodyear, Avondale and Litchfield Park are on the hook for nearly \$4 million to cover the acceleration of the Interstate 10 widening.

The Maricopa Association of Governments regional council decided this week the cities should get just \$6 million of the \$10 million the Legislature had earmarked for the three cities' cost of the acceleration of freeway construction from Loop 101 to Sarival Avenue.

Now the mayors of Avondale and Litchfield Park are unsure their cities will pick up their shares of the \$4 million. But Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh said he's confident his city will.

"We expected this to be needed," he said. "We'll pull it out of the general fund."

The three cities each have to vote to authorize the expenses at upcoming City Council meetings:

- Goodyear would owe \$2.1 million.
- Avondale would owe \$1.4 million.
- Litchfield Park would owe \$110,000.

"Goodyear signed onto this with an obligation to finish this, and we will continue that," Cavanaugh said. At the same time, he added, "We cannot take on the freeway ourselves. If these two cities go south, that is a significant problem."

At least two cities have to stay on board to remain eligible for the \$6 million reimbursement.

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers, who is in the middle of a heated mayoral campaign, said she is not certain if she could support picking up the \$1.4 million and will have to re-examine the city's budget. But she said she doesn't think her peers on the Avondale council would go for it.

Litchfield Park Mayor Tom Schoaf said the highway benefits everyone and that it's unfair his city is on the hook to pay extra to widen a federal highway.

"It's a difficult problem that MAG has left us with," he said. "It's too soon to tell how this is going to wash out. We still have

some work to do to see if we can salvage this situation."

At the MAG regional council meeting Wednesday, elected officials from across the Valley voted on how much the three Southwest Valley cities should get.

Goodyear, Avondale and Litchfield Park all were on the losing side to reimburse the full \$10 million.

But the mayors of Avondale and Litchfield Park had an all-or-nothing attitude and cast "no" votes for the \$6 million compromise.

Rogers assailed Phoenix for jeopardizing funding to speed up the widening of I-10. The freeway is clogged daily with commuters and truckers as it narrows to two lanes in each direction in the Southwest Valley.

"It's a blatant abuse of power," Rogers said.

Phoenix City Councilwoman Peggy Neely invoked an obscure MAG rule that throws out the common practice of counting one vote per city and instead weighs votes based on a city's population.

With the heft of Phoenix's population and the East Valley cities' support, Neely stopped the Southwest Valley from receiving \$10 million toward speeding up construction.

**Reach the reporter at (602) 444-6511.**

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